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## WILDERNESS AND THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

The topic I bring before you this afternoon not only aptly fits the theme, "The Political Landscape," it is the political landscape! This recognition is more than a mere play on words; it is a basic truth which we are going to have to deal with if we successfully resolve the wilderness classification issue.

There are among us some who lament that wilderness classification has become political--overlooking the fact that this has been the case for fifty years. Assistant Regional Forester Aldo Leopold probably engaged in a bit of personal "political persuasion" right here in Albuquerque, when he convinced his superior to set aside three-quarters of a million acres as the Gila Wilderness some 53 years ago. Certainly the pressures for competing uses were nowhere near what they are in this day, but Leopold and his boss must have felt some of the same apprehension experienced by the first man to bite into a tomato.

During that same era, Forest Service Landscape Architect Art Carhart was up against some competing land use situations. At Trappers Lake in Colorado, he convinced the Regional Forester to abandon creation of a subdivision of summer homes, thus permitting eventual inclusion of the area in the Flattops Wilderness. He kicked a hornet nest in northern Minnesota when he devised a management plan, approved by Secretary Jardine in 1926, which said that no roads would be built,

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Presented by Dr. M. Rupert Cutler, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Conservation, Research and Education, at the annual meeting of the Society of American Foresters, October 5, 1977, 2-4 p.m., Albuquerque, New Mexico.

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that the waterways would serve as the transportation arteries. And he made today's debate over the proper boundaries for a million-acre Boundary Waters Wilderness possible.

As Bob Marshall, the Forest Service's first Director of Recreation and Lands, developed the regulations which formed the initial "system" of wildernesses, wild areas, primitive areas, and roadless areas, he was working in a "hot kitchen" but he did not get out. Instead, he saw his dedication to natural area management adopted by many others, and his efforts place the Forest Service in the preeminent position it enjoys to this day in the wilderness field. I've had the privilege of knowing Bob Marshall's brothers, George and Jim, through my Wilderness Society activity and feel that I've been exposed to Bob's philosophy through them.

For nearly two decades after Bob Marshall's death in 1939, we didn't have much time to think about wilderness matters. World War II and the Korean conflict, with attendant burgeoning technology and economic growth, held the Nation's attention. In the late '50s and early '60s, the great debate on the Wilderness Act was waged, culminating with passage in 1964. Conservation giants such as Howard Zahnizer and Henry Clepper strode the stage then, debating the merits of the proposed legislation.

Many thought the issue settled in 1964, except for the Congressional actions resulting from the studies the Wilderness Act mandated. The ten-year study of specified areas was only partially completed when the Forest Service acknowledged that there were areas of National Forest which really should be managed for wilderness values but which were not mandated for study. The 1972 Roadless Area Review and Evaluation, which we now refer to as RARE I, was a bold step by former Chief Ed Cliff toward setting the priorities for wilderness study--and which was intended to close the traverse. This was not to be.

RARE I had some shortcomings. Inventory criteria were too general, some resulting inconsistencies and overlooked areas from region to region--and failure to include eastern forests--clouded the generally good aspects of the review. The public was not made a full partner in the process at an early stage of RARE I.

In jig time, the Forest Service found itself in court, challenged, in the Sierra Club vs. Butz suit, to give fuller consideration to wilderness potential for all the inventoried roadless areas. The policy adopted in late 1972 to again assess the wilderness potential of each inventoried area during the land management planning process, with the public given opportunity through the environmental statement process to comment, partially calmed the troubled political waters.

The calm following Judge Conti's dismissal of the suit was short-lived, however. The land management planning process proved incapable of jointly handling the national political nature of the wilderness question in context of the local evaluation which was the hallmark of the unit planning effort. Soon, the planning process was being impacted with appeals and court challenges. This had the effect of slowing the delivery of goods and services the American people need and expect from the National Forests. The Congress, reflecting dissatisfactions of its constituencies, began taking more aggressive action in the wilderness designation process, "piecemealing" the question out of context with comprehensive land management planning.

When the Carter Administration took office, a number of these "piecemeal" legislative proposals were on the Congressional front burner. This Administration, which favors full and prompt development of a quality National Wilderness Preservation System, was compelled to go on record early this year on several proposals without adequate time for analysis of the entire situation. This was an awkward, uncomfortable situation for me.

Working with Chief McGuire, I decided that the Nation would be best served if we could somehow bring the whole National Forest System

wilderness designation process to a timely resolution, using a planned and, insofar as it can be, controlled process. There are real payoffs to all concerned if we can get this job done.

The concepts for this special planning project, which we now call RARE II for want of a better name, are straightforward. First, a completely new run must be made at the national inventory, eliminating all the inconsistency which can be accomplished within the timeframes. The public is to be made a full partner in each of the steps from the initial inventory through to final selection of alternative courses at the end of the project. There must be payouts at each end of the spectrum--wilderness and nonwilderness. Of great importance is our determination that the project be completed in a timely fashion. We are completely committed to carry RARE II to a prompt conclusion.

The two primary aims of RARE II are to determine which roadless and undeveloped areas are needed to round out a quality National Wilderness Preservation System and to determine which roadless areas should receive no further wilderness consideration but be devoted to other uses. We are not so naive as to believe that during such a short time frame each and every roadless area can be successfully dropped into one or the other of these neat categories. Some areas will have

to be remanded to more traditional, but more time-consuming, planning and study processes. The measure of success, however, must be judged by how small we can keep the unresolved group of areas.

Most of you are well-versed in the methodology the Forest Service is using for RARE II, so I won't take your time to repeat it all. There are several elements, however, which I know you find bothersome. One is the criteria the Forest Service developed for the initial inventory done before the public workshops began. Before RARE I, the Congress had been generally accepting the Forest Service's relatively strict judgment as to the marks of man's activities which were not acceptable in an area to be designated wilderness --this has been dubbed the "purity" position. For the past half dozen years, however, Congress has strongly indicated that it considers minimal marks of man's activities acceptable in classification actions. The definition of "roadless area" and the criteria for developments used in RARE II are derived from study of these later expressions of the Congress. Certainly it is prudent to use criteria which are as close as possible to those being accepted by the only authority currently empowered to designate wilderness.

Another bothersome element is that there is bound to be some degree of impact on regular forest activities and programs for the duration of

the review. The Forest Service, for instance, has determined that probably RARE II inventory will carry the potential to cause shortfall of timber sale volume offered in Fiscal Year 1978 of a maximum of 307 million board feet. We believe that we have the capability to reduce this maximum potential to a minimal effect through aggressive reprogramming of areas, location of alternative sale areas within the same working circles, and other positive action steps and we will use this capability.

If I get no other message across today, I want to make certain you understand that I intend to: (1) Carry this project to its proper and final conclusion, as promptly as possible, and (2) to hold adverse impacts to absolutely the lowest level possible.

Many of you are concerned about the plans for the next steps in RARE II. Later this month, the Chief will be announcing the final inventory list. The list will be published in the Federal Register with an invitation for public suggestions on the final list. Immediately thereafter, the evaluation phase will begin. This will be an open process in which the public must be kept abreast of progress and given opportunities to provide advice and counsel. The evaluation will involve a two-step screening of all the roadless areas. First, the areas will be screened to determine which possess the attributes needed to round out a quality Wilderness System. This will include such

attributes as representation of major ecosystems, and landforms, availability to visitors, distribution in relation to population centers, and several other selection criteria. The roadless areas including those which seem likely candidates to fill gaps in the existing Wilderness System will then undergo socioeconomic tradeoff analysis, performed at the regional level. Alternatives will be cast up in a nationwide programmatic environmental statement accompanying localized draft environmental statements--possibly state-by-state recommendations and alternatives.

We intend in the late summer of 1978 to have another round of formal public comment. This is the time the people will be asked for opinions on whether or not specific areas should be recommended for wilderness designation. This will provide a full field season for persons to get into and study the areas on which they wish to provide comment. At the end of 1978, we will be concluding RARE II with a final report and environmental statement, after which draft legislation to implement our recommendations will be made available to the Congress.

I want to reemphasize several points relating to the entire wilderness classification issue as well as the specific review currently underway. First and foremost, we as a Nation should resolve the issues now. Procrastination today may mean that otherwise-deserving areas will be

irretrievably committed to uses that preclude them ever becoming wilderness. Continued debate and controversy over the issue is debilitating and divisive. Persons and industries depending upon goods and services from the National Forests and National Grasslands must be able to look to the future with greater assurance that the needed products and amenities will be there and available on a sustained-yield basis.

The energies of the managing agencies, whether the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, or Fish and Wildlife Service, are needed in managing the lands, some for wilderness and the rest for the various other multiple uses.

Until the National Wilderness Preservation System is rounded out to a level acceptable to the American people as a whole, all of us lose because of the static in the system--the energy wasted in coping with controversy. I pledge my efforts to move the process as close to completion as I can, as quickly as possible. All of us should capitalize on any consensus we can find for areas considered in RARE II, rather intransigent about the honest differences some of us may have. We should fulfill the promise given the American people by the Congress in the 1964 Wilderness Act, to deliver "...an enduring resource of wilderness." Then we can optimize our investments of dollars, public and private, and manpower, paid and volunteer, to gain full measure of public benefit from the National Forest System.

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